



Waukesha Water Utility

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Waukesha releases water conservation and protection plan

“No matter what the source, our water must be protected,” according to Waukesha Mayor Carol Lombardi. The mayor today released the outline of the city’s four-point proposal to conserve, protect and improve water resources.

Mayor Lombardi predicted that Waukesha’s integrated water resource protection plan will make the city a leader among Midwest communities in conserving and protecting water resources.

1. Conservation

“Conservation is a major part of our effort,” according to Dan Duchniak, the general manager of the Waukesha Water Utility. The city is developing strategies to reduce water use by 20% by 2020. The conservation plan, which will include both restrictions and incentives, will be announced by September 2005.

2. Stormwater management

“We will also develop plans to make sure that water is protected and replenished during the natural water cycle,” Duchniak said. The city will work to adopt stormwater best management practices to ensure that rainfall and snowmelt can soak into the ground instead of going into surface waters and sewers.

“Groundwater replenishment is important to protect drinking water and support surface water habitats,” Duchniak said. The city will work with Waukesha County, which is developing a County wide stormwater master plan, to manage stormwater runoff. Runoff can add pollutants such as oil and grease, chemicals, nutrients, metals, and bacteria to water as it flows across hard surfaces, transporting the pollutants to groundwater, streams, rivers and lakes.

3. Planning and zoning

The city will review planning and zoning ordinances to require that new developments have no impact on the natural flow of water to groundwater. Low impact development (LID) design will integrate stormwater management with erosion and sedimentation controls. LID uses natural systems, such as wetlands, rain gardens, and other means, to keep rainwater on site. This is different from traditional development that uses pipes and drains, ponds, and storm sewers to move water quickly off site and into streams, rivers, and lakes.

“It may be necessary to first update the local comprehensive plan to set a goal for open space and conservation planning and design,” Duchniak said.

4. Sourcewater protection plans

The city will also work with Waukesha County and its communities to create a plan to protect sources of drinking water from pollution. “Sourcewater protection areas are created to keep contamination sources that may pollute groundwater and surface water supplies at a safe distance.

“Protecting our source waters is not just the responsible thing to do; it also makes economic sense because treating or replacing water sources is more expensive than prevention of the problems,” Duchniak said. Failure to protect source water will lead to poorer water quality, threats to public health and lower property values, he explained.

The city will work with surrounding communities that share its source water areas. The recharge areas for the deeper aquifers that support Waukesha’s public water supply and replenish Lake Michigan cover several counties.

Duchniak said the city is also exploring new sources of water. Its current water source contains radium that exceeds the federal standards. Although treatment measures are being initiated to treat the water for radium, groundwater contamination can be an increasing problem as area communities continue to pump out groundwater and lower the water table.

“We need to explore long-term solutions to our water problems, including a new water supply,” Lombardi said. “But we must also ensure that we are conserving and protecting those water supplies.”